

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 ISO-00 NEAE-00 HA-05 CIAE-00
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P R 311320Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8306
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY ANKARA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KABUL 4425

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINR, PGOV, PINT, SHUM, AF
SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN IMPROVES SOMEWHAT

REF: KABUL 3933

1. SUMMARY. THE NEW AFGHAN REGIME'S OVERALL HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD REMAINS UNFAVORABLE, BUT SOME POSITIVE SIGNS CAN BE NOTED. THE LEADERSHIP HAS DISPLAYED GREAT SENSITIVITY TO FOREIGN CRITICISM AND DIPLOMATIC APPROACHES IN THIS FIELD. SOME ARRESTS CONTINUE, BUT THESE NOW APPEAR TO BE PRIMARILY LIMITED TO FORMER OFFICIALS WHO MAY BE PERCEIVED BY THE NEW LEADERS AS HAVING BEEN CORRUPT OR INCOMPETENT DURING THEIR INCUMBENCIES. WIDESPREAD FLIGHT FROM THE COUNTRY BY MEMBERS OF THE FORMER UPPER CLASSES HAS NOT YET TAKEN PLACE, ALTHOUGH INCREASING SIGNS INDICATE THAT SUCH AN EXODUS MAY NOT BE TOO FAR OFF. ON BALANCE, THE REGIME'S RECORD IS STILL NOT GOOD, BUT THE RECENT ABSENCE OF CONFIRMED POLITICAL EXECUTIONS, AND A LESSENING PACE OF ARRESTS (ESPECIALLY
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OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN) PROVIDE SOME HOPE THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT MAY HAVE SATIATED ITS INITIAL DESIRE FOR REVENGE AGAINST THE "NADERI CLIQUE" AND ALTERED ITS POLICE APPROACH TO SOME EXTENT. POSSIBLE TRIALS INVOLVING MOHAMMADZAI YOUTHS AS YOUNG AS 14, HOWEVER, COULD TARNISH THE REGIME'S IMAGE EVEN FURTHER. END OF SUMMARY.

2. ARRESTS OF FORMER GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS OF THE DAOUD AND ROYAL REGIMES CONTINUE, BUT THEY HAVE SLACKENED TO A CONSIDERABLE DEGREE. WE HAVE HEARD NO RECENT REPORTS THAT ENTIRE FAMILIES HAVE BEEN ROUNDED UP. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE GREAT MAJORITY OF THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN PREVIOUSLY TAKEN INTO CUSTODY HAVE NOT YET BEEN RELEASED. ABDUL GHAFUR RAWAN FARHADI, FORMER DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER UNDER THE MONARCHY -- AND ONE OF AFGHANISTAN'S FOREMOST INTELLECTUALS -- WAS ARRESTED ABOUT MIDNIGHT ON MAY 26. THE ARRESTING SOLDIERS HAD EARLIER MISTAKENLY COME TO THE DOOR OF A NEARBY PAKISTANI DIPLOMAT, DEMANDING FARHADI, AND THEIR REPORTEDLY HARSH DEMEANOR ILLUSTRATED THIS REGIME'S CONTINUING HOSTILITY TOWARD SOME FORMER PROMINENT OFFICIALS. FARHADI WAS RUMORED TO HAVE ACCEPTED BRIBES FROM THE IRANIANS AT THE TIME OF THE 1973 HELMAND WATERS AGREEMENT, AND IT COULD BE THAT THIS NEW REGIME IS DIRECTING ITS ATTENTION TO OFFICIALS WHOM IT FEELS ARE PARTICULARLY CORRUPT.

3. WE HAVE ALSO HEARD THAT THE FORMER MINISTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH, DR. ABDUL OMAR, HAS BEEN REARRESTED (HE WAS ARRESTED AND RELEASED SHORTLY AFTER THE REVOLUTION), BUT THIS ACTION WAS REPORTEDLY TAKEN IN CONNECTION WITH A CURRENT INVESTIGATION OF LAST SPRING'S SCANDAL INVOLVING THE UNREPORTED DEATHS AND SHALLOW BURIAL OF SEVERAL "MENTAL PATIENTS" -- WHICH MAY OR MAY NOT HAVE INVOLVED DAOUDIST POLITICAL PERSECUTION.

4. THERE ARE APPARENTLY MORE POLITICAL PRISONERS BEING HELD AT
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PUL-I-CHARKI PRISON JUST OUTSIDE KABUL THAN WE HAD ORIGINALLY ESTIMATED, SINCE TWO PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN RELEASED HAVE CLAIMED THAT ABOUT 170-190 MOHAMMADZAIS AND 300-400 NON-MOHAMMADZAIS ARE INCARCERATED IN THAT AS-YET-UNFINISHED INSTALLATION. RELATIONS OF THESE PRISONERS ARE PERMITTED TO VISIT THE PRISON WITH FOOD FOR THEIR KIN -- AND TO EXCHANGE NOTES THROUGH THE JAILORS. AN OMINOUS NOTE IN THIS REGARD IS THE STORY NOW MAKING THE ROUNDS HERE THAT ALL ARRESTED MOHAMMADZAI MALES OVER THE AGE OF 14 WILL BE TRIED UNDER REVOLUTIONARY LAW FOR "THEIR PREVIOUS CRIMES," ALTHOUGH FEMALES AND MALES UNDER 14 WILL OSTENSIBLY EVENTUALLY BE RELEASED.

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5. WE HAVE NOT YET BEEN ABLE TO CONFIRM THAT ANY OF THE REPORTED POST-REVOLUTION EXECUTIONS OF FORMER OFFICIALS HAVE, IN FACT, TAKEN PLACE, AND RUMORS ALONG THESE LINES HAVE ABATED CONSIDERABLY OVER THE PAST TWO WEEKS. FOR EXAMPLE, FORMER PRIME MINISTER NUR AHMAD ETEMADI, WHO HAD BEEN ARRESTED AND REPORTEDLY EXECUTED, IS, ACCORDING TO A FAMILY MEMBER, APPARENTLY STILL ALIVE AND IN JAIL. ACCORDING TO ONE STORY, ETEMADI SPENDS HOURS EACH DAY WRITING HIS "MEMOIRS" OF HIS DAYS IN POWER, AN EXERCISE WHICH CONCEIVABLY COULD BE USED BY THIS REGIME TO UNCOVER OTHER SKELETONS, OR WHICH COULD PROVIDE JUSTIFICATION FOR FURTHER ACTION AGAINST ETEMADI AND/OR HIS FORMER COLLEAGUES.

6. SOME SLIM RAYS OF HOPE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS HAVE RECENTLY BROKEN THROUGH THE CLOUDS. THE GOVERNMENT'S DECREE NUMBER THREE OF MAY 14 ASSERTED THAT THOSE LAWS OF THE PREVIOUS REGIME WHICH WERE NOT INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE "GOALS OF THE REVOLUTION" WOULD CONTINUE IN FORCE. THIS MIGHT INDICATE A PARTIAL RELAXATION OF MARTIAL LAW. MOREOVER, TARAQI, IN HIS MAY 9 POLICY SPEECH, CONFIDENTIAL

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HINTED AT THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE NEW REGIME WOULD PREPARE ITS OWN CONSTITUTION, ALTHOUGH THERE HAS BEEN NO INDICATION WHEN SUCH A DOCUMENT MIGHT BE FORTHCOMING. ADDITIONALLY, THERE HAVE BEEN A FEW REPORTS THAT SEVERAL DETAINEES ARE BEING RELEASED FROM PRISON FOR A FEW HOURS EVERY DAY AND ALLOWED TO RETURN TO THEIR HOMES. A FEW OTHERS HAVE BEEN RELEASED ALTOGETHER. IF THESE REPORTS WERE TRUE, HOWEVER, THESE PEOPLE WOULD REPRESENT A TINY FRACTION OF THOSE ARRESTED SO FAR, AND THERE HAVE BEEN NO INDICATIONS THAT THIS TRICKLE MAY ASSUME MORE GENEROUS PROPORTIONS.

7. THE ANTICIPATED HEGIRA FROM AFGHANISTAN BY MEMBERS OF THE UPPER CLASSES HAS NOT YET OCCURRED, ALTHOUGH MEMBERS OF THE MISSION ARE EXPERIENCING INCREASINGLY FREQUENT, BUT STILL CAUTIOUS, APPROACHES BY AFGHAN FRIENDS REGARDING ENTRY REQUIREMENTS AS IMMIGRANTS OR REFUGEES INTO THE UNITED STATES. WE EXPECT THIS TREND TO ACCELERATE AS THE REGIME'S PROGRAMS, WHICH ARE DIRECTED AGAINST THE INTERESTS OF THE FORMERLY PRIVILEGED CLASSES, TAKE FIRMER HOLD.

8. IN SUM, THE REGIME'S OVERALL HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD REMAINS UNFAVORABLE, ALTHOUGH THERE ARE SIGNS THAT THE LEADERSHIP'S SENSITIVITY TO FOREIGN CRITICISM, DEMONSTRATED BY ITS MAY 17 OFFICIAL STATEMENT DENYING HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS, MAY BE MODERATING THE GOVERNMENT'S OVERALL BEHAVIOR. ON THE SURFACE, THE INCIDENCE OF REPORTS REGARDING GROSS VIOLATIONS OF MANY AFGHANS' HUMAN RIGHTS HAS TAPERED OFF OVER THE PAST TWO WEEKS, ALTHOUGH IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER THIS FAVORABLE TREND WILL BE MAINTAINED.

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